

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 431 222

EA 029 868

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TITLE Journey without Maps: Diverse Cultural Values and Leadership in School Communities.
PUB DATE 1999-04-00
NOTE 46p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 19-23, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Influences; Culture Conflict; Educational Environment; Elementary Education; Hispanic Americans; *Instructional Leadership; Parent Attitudes; Principals; Puerto Ricans; School Community Relationship; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Latinas

ABSTRACT

This paper draws upon a larger study that examined the experiences of a newly appointed Latina principal, the faculty members of her school, and the constituent school community in an attempt to understand how differing cultural values shape stakeholders' perceptions of their school and its leader. It also explores how these same values influence individual and group actions. To gather data for the study, all the teachers and the principal were interviewed four times. Fifteen families, whose children attended the school, were also interviewed. The researcher volunteered to teach classes so that she could better grasp the school's culture. The report provides a careful outline of the principal's arrival and the challenges that she faced in trying to save an urban elementary school with declining enrollment and an entrenched teaching staff. It describes how the principal was able to keep the school from closing by forming alliances with businesses and professionals, but, in the process, alienated much of the school community in doing so. The report describes what successful leadership means to different groups. It concludes that extant leadership models fail to capture the complexity of interactions in a single system, and it is essential to understand the system as a whole. (Contains 54 references.) (RJM)

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**Journey Without Maps:
Diverse Cultural Values and Leadership in School Communities**

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Paper presented at the annual conference of the
American Educational Research Association
April, 1999, Montreal, Canada

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Schools, like many other institutions in our society, were created by and for an earlier America. Growing out of a society whose values and direction were largely the creation of middle-class white males, schools, beyond eight grade, were structured to serve the educational and developmental needs of this small elite (Cremin, 1970; Katz, 1968). Groups such as blacks, Asians, Native Americans, and in many cases, females, were often either marginalized or systematically excluded. With changes in the demographics of our citizenry, however, our national economy, and our notions of cultural identity and social justice, the expectations and role of schools, and their leadership in society and in local communities, have evolved dramatically.

Witnessing the arrival of students, teachers, parents, and administrators at any urban school today, the observer of a century ago would be struck not by the variety of languages spoken (for the end of the last century saw as great a linguistic multiplicity) but by the diversity of races and ethnicities present. If this observer were to have a look inside the school's administrative offices, he would be equally surprised by the number of women he would find in positions of leadership, and no doubt astonished that increasing numbers of these leaders are women of color. This ethno-racial diversity, as well as the diversity of roles and gender, has made of urban schools complex communities that defy simple explanations and single-dimension theories and organizational studies.

Today, the demographics of education remain in flux. As the neighborhoods, parental expectations, and the nation's cultural identity and educational purpose continue to change, so too do the constitution and governance structures of schools. And even

though the role of administrator in American public education grew out of an earlier Anglo-American colonial model, this leadership role has begun to evolve as well. The urban superintendent or school principal is more frequently female now (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1991). And increasing percentages of these women are members of minority groups, bringing to their traditional positions different cultural and ethnic understandings and expressions of leadership (Murphy, 1988).

Unlike the schools of even thirty years ago, in an inner-city school today one might well find a female, African-American principal, a teaching staff composed of equal numbers of whites and blacks -- all of this situated in a neighborhood that is predominately Latino. Each of these groups would bring its own expectations of the school and its principal, each group defining effective leadership in terms of its own experiences and cultural norms. Clearly, the traditional role of leader no longer corresponds to the expectations of a majority of the members of such communities, and yet the questions remain: How are these schools being led? How do principals who are not white, male Anglos lead in such diverse schools and communities?

Too often these very complex cultural realities are studied in binary terms: black versus white, male versus female, parent versus teacher. Adding to the seductive simplicity of such conceptual frameworks is the tendency to reduce the governance of these communities to organizational puzzles, ripe for innovative changes in design, and hence, for "magic bullet" solutions. The realities of our schools are far more complicated than such studies suggest and are often conceptually capable of even detecting. Because schools are embedded in a complex network of communities, stakeholders, and political interests, institutional reform cannot be considered in isolation of larger social forces. At

the heart of educational change lie the relationships among the individuals and groups of which our society is comprised. Governance and reform measures that do not place the values of constituent groups within schools at the center of their efforts will never affect more than surface structures.

By embedding the school, its governance structures and even academic mission, more democratically and more deeply in its community, one assumption appears to be that it will be more representative and responsive to those it serves. Authority in such systems no longer derives from the formal position of leader, but rather, collectively, "[t]he sources of authority they appeal to are the values that are central to the school, and the commitments that everyone has made to them" (Sergiovanni, 1996:91-92). But what does this mean when different groups hold different values, and thus conceive of their commitments differently? How is the leader to proceed when the values of constituent groups are in competition with one another? Where do the principal's own values figure in leading these communities?

This paper draws upon a larger study wherein the experiences of a newly appointed Latina principal, the faculty members of her school, and the constituent school community are explored in an attempt to understand the ways differing cultural values shape what members of a diverse community expect of their school and its leader, and how these same values influence their individual and group actions.

The Setting

When Elena Hernández agreed to accept the principalship of the Mary Blane

School, she knew she faced a series of immediate challenges. Blane was a small K-5 elementary school located in the blighted Codman Square area of central Dorchester, a borough of Boston. Even though the faculty had remained stable over the last fifteen years, student enrollments had been declining steadily since the busing crisis of the early 1970s. With education budgets growing ever leaner in Boston, Mary Blane could not compete with larger schools in the scramble for resources. With the adoption of the Choice Plan in the Boston system, it was expected that some schools would flourish while others would fail. And in fact, many Blane families had chosen to enroll their children in more prestigious schools. By 1991, the Blane School had become known as a "dumping ground" for children who could not make it in other schools. Enrollment had dropped to 138, a full 50 percent under capacity.

Built in 1937 to educate the children of its then largely Irish-American, working-class neighborhood, Blane remained predominantly white well into the 1960s. Not until 1966 did Blane hire its first African-American teacher. Boston's desegregation plan in the 1970s integrated the school's student body, but the teaching and administrative staff remained largely white -- even as the surrounding neighborhoods became predominantly black. At the time of Hernández's appointment in 1991, the staff consisted of equal numbers of black and white teachers, six and six. The ethnic makeup of the school's Codman Square neighborhood, however, was more diverse: 58 percent black, 27 percent white, 11 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent Asian (The Boston Sunday Globe, 1995:22). Additionally, by 1990, a full 45 percent of all new residents in Dorchester were members of newcomer immigrant groups (Boston Foundation, 1994).

The Faculty

The faculty at Mary Blane was a strong, independent group. A majority had been at the school for more than ten years, some for more than twenty. They were proud of their camaraderie, of the way they supported one another in difficult times, and that they had "seen the school through thick and thin," even as principals had come and gone. Blane, they felt, had suffered from weak leadership over the years; all too often principals had given up in the face of adversity or expediently accepted professional opportunities elsewhere. Principals had been unwilling to fight for teachers and students, and for the resources that would attract sufficient numbers to keep the school doors open.

The Principal

Born and educated in Puerto Rico, Elena Hernández came to the United States in 1975 as a counselor in the Boston public schools. After years of teaching at different levels and in different disciplines at home, she found Boston a dramatic change from what she had known:

[The American emphasis on race] is something that shocked me when I came into this system; at the time I came, there were classifications as White Puerto Rican and Black Puerto Rican, and that really shocked me. We don't think black and white in my culture.

As a counselor, she spent much of her time working with the legal system. But soon growing frustrated at the lack of impact she was having with students, Hernández decided to take the courses necessary to qualify as a middle-school teacher. She had

never wanted to be an administrator.

Once in the classroom, however, she began to see things differently. When she began to speak out against what she perceived to be unfair treatment by administrators, she soon gained the respect and support of her fellow teachers. When the position of assistant principal opened up in the school where she worked, her fellow teachers had urged her to apply. She received that appointment, and eventually, the Mary Blane appointment followed.

In reflecting on the connections between her own background and her present-day educational values, Hernández harkens back to the sense of community she found in the rural school she attended as a youngster:

There weren't enough books or paper and pencils in that school. But the teachers made us see that education could give us something better. They were very demanding. The class was always a place of escape from whatever problems you might have [outside of school] because the focus was on learning. The school was the center of our [lives]. That's what schools are meant to be. Students don't need "mothering."

Entry

Hernández calculated that to keep Blane open, she would need wide support from the parents and community. But to gain that support, she needed "to reach out" to the community and its concerns. With a bit of research she was able to connect with a host of local organizations dedicated to crime prevention, community health, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Hernández began to attend their meetings and community functions, making sure they knew that the Blane School was interested in their work. She made a point of getting to know their leaders.

At the same time, Hernández began to reach out to professional parents. While the Blane School was situated in a predominately African-American area, it bordered Melville Park, a neighborhood of "gentrified" homes, where young white families had moved during the 1980s. Working with members of the Parents Council, Hernández set out to attract these professional families to her school. Blane could not offer the programs of the larger schools, but it could offer these young families the advantage of smaller classes, intimate contact with teachers, and direct influence with the principal. In turn, these families might bring resources on which the school could draw: their professional business connections, knowledge of fundraising, and expectations of working with their children's school.

As a statement of care and commitment to the school, Hernández set about clearing and cleaning the schoolyard. For many years the secluded area behind the school building had been used as a neighborhood dumping ground. Calling on everyone in the school community to participate, Hernández joined with students, parents, and members of the community to clean up the school. Disappointingly for Hernández, few teachers joined in the clean up. As a culmination and celebration of their community day, Hernández planted daffodil bulbs behind the school in the area where trash had been. "Flowers are important in my culture; you might have the poorest house in the village but you can always make it pretty with flowers," Hernández explained.

Hernández's actions, however, were not understood by everyone. One teacher recalls:

We had a community day...and we had parents and kids and people from the community here. Well, Ms. Hernández begins by telling all the kids about what she used to do as a kid in Puerto Rico -- which is fine! But she

takes us all out and plants potatoes! Now I think she meant that to be a gesture of community building, but she needs to understand that cultivating potatoes in the schoolyard just looks odd to this community...They don't understand sometimes what she is about.

By the beginning of the next academic year, enrollments had risen to 156. Word had begun to get out in the community that things were changing at Mary Blane; the new principal had strong notions of how a school should be run, and she would fight for them.

A Stronger School

As enrollments grew, Hernández was pleased that professional families were once again returning to the school. Increasingly, they were attracted by the "family atmosphere," the influence they were able to exert with the principal, and the sense of purpose and stability that the principal was providing. District-wide testing in the spring revealed that academic achievement was once again on the rise.

Over the next months, Hernández launched a school-business partnership with John Hancock Insurance and BayBank to support community-building programs, purchase needed technology for the school, and sponsor professional development for the faculty. She worked to breathe life into the Parents Council, guided by professional parents with a knowledge of the business community. Proposals from the parents' group financed the buying of new computers, books and materials, and the beginnings of a fund for constructing a well-equipped playground.

Not everyone perceived these developments in the same way, however. Some

faculty members felt left out of the reforms taking place; they had, they believed, "a wealth of experience with the school and community," and felt that the principal was not taking advantage of them as a resource. Even though Hernández asked them to commit more time to the creation of new curricular and social activities, some said these were ideas imposed by the principal. Her reforms were "flashy and impressive to outsiders," but the teachers would have preferred that she pay more attention to classroom and community issues. Hernández had sought their input into new programs; she had carefully included them in planning sessions. This notwithstanding, teachers criticized her efforts. "The programs we have here now were planned by Hancock and [Hernández] -- the staff didn't hear anything about it until later," recalls one teacher. The teachers had issues that they wanted addressed. Above all, the teachers said, they wanted to be treated like the professionals they were.

More troubling, however, was that some of the teaching staff perceived Hernández to be a "manager," not a "leader." Her style, they said, was autocratic, leaving little room for discussion with the largely female staff. "I think I see it as the army: In the army you're not asked what you feel. You're told to do this, this and this," explained an African-American teacher. Conversely, some teachers found her work with professionals, and particularly the men at Hancock, to be not assertive enough. One teacher offered her understanding of this phenomenon: "Hispanic women are less assertive in these situations [with men]. They are accustomed to a top-down management culture, and that means run by men."

At the same time, some parents expressed concern at "the kind of people" now attracted to this "neighborhood school." Hernández, they thought, was focusing on

bringing professional, "white" people into the school -- while the needs of the poor, local children were being ignored. Hernández had to understand, many said, that Blane would never be one of the flagship schools of the Boston system; it was meant to serve its neighborhood. An African-American teacher expressed a further concern:

You've got to live here to understand how the drugs and violence and crime affect these children. It can't be theory to you. These kids aren't going to do what you say just because you're the principal; they've got to trust you and see you every day...and see that you care about them. Same goes for the parents: you've got to know where they're coming from.

By the end of Hernández's second year as principal, prospects for the Mary Blane School had improved dramatically. Enrollments stood at well over 200. Talk of the school's closing had ceased; in fact, the School Committee announced over the summer that Blane would be completely renovated in the coming academic year. The embattled feeling was lifting.

Methodology

Because I wished to explore the teachers' understanding of the principal's leadership, as well as the principal's understanding of her own role, I knew that I ran the risk of being identified with the principal (and her interests) if I did not establish an

immediate and separate rapport with the teachers. Access to the Mary Blane School was granted me by the principal. Access to the staff, however, came from the teachers' representative to the union, Mrs. Billings. I was careful not to involve the principal in this process.

I systematically set about visiting and interviewing the teachers in their classes. In total, I interviewed all the teachers and the principal four times. To demonstrate that my interests weren't merely opportunistic, on Thursdays and Fridays when I was in the building conducting interviews, I volunteered to teach Spanish, on a rotating basis, to groups the teachers chose. This enabled me to get to know students and to understand the academic and disciplinary concerns I had begun to hear about in my interviews. It also illuminated my understanding of issues raised at faculty meetings. As a result, my questions became more sophisticated and context specific. This reflexive relationship greatly enriched both my data-gathering strategies and the quality of the data I was able to gather.

Much the same strategy served to move my research beyond the school into the community. Because I taught their children, parents were more inclined to open their doors to me, or in cases where circumstances and culture precluded such intimate contact, they agreed to meet me at school or in bars and restaurants. In total, I interviewed fifteen families on two different occasions, taking care to reach out to parents from different ethnic, racial, and socio-economic groups. My intention in doing so was not so much to offer a representative sample of the community's demographics, although that issue is present, but more to gain an impression of the breadth of experiences and opinions to be encountered there.

Leadership

Early studies of leadership focused on the characteristics that the successful leader possessed, reasoning that there would be a set of identifiable traits associated with this group of individuals (Stogdill, 1948; Bass, 1985). Later studies suggested, however, that the salience of these traits (intelligence, dominance, self-confidence, etc.) was less important than the behaviors that the leader exhibited in actual situations (Yukl, 1971). This line of research connected behavior to a context, thus suggesting that certain behaviors might be more effective in specific situations. But a satisfactory response to the question, Which leader behaviors produce positive outcomes? remained beyond the conceptual capacity of these studies.

Subsequent models of leadership proposed that the personal characteristics of leaders and the contexts in which they operate influence what leaders do, and this in turn, influence the outcomes the leaders produce (Burns, 1978; Gardner, 1986; Lipsky, 1980; Heifetz & Sinder, 1987). Studies growing out of this model tended to be framed in terms of the interactive processes among the leader, the group, and the leader's behavior. Group in these cognitive studies was usually examined in terms of member interdependence, shared goals, and the satisfaction individuals derive from membership in the group (Hemphill, 1949). In this framing of group, however, the focus centered on the behaviors and values that individual group members developed within the context of the group, leaving unexamined the values individuals might hold before entering the group. And even though subsequent iterations of this line of research such as intergroup theory and group-as-a-whole theory admitted for intergroup dynamics being influenced by

individual characteristics such as race, ethnic identity, and gender, studies of the phenomenon have generally been situated among subgroups (Alderfer, 1977; Wells, 1985). Few studies have sought to trace the reciprocal influence of these inherent characteristics on the leader of the group; or, similarly, the possible influence of the leader's own inherent characteristics on the group's dynamics. Instead, these studies have concentrated on the ways managers shape meaning for subordinates, seldom exploring ways that the reverse might be true (Pfeffer, 1981; Schein, 1985; Smircich & Morgan, 1983).

More recently, studies of leadership have proceeded from an institutional theory of social organizations perspective which holds that leadership flows throughout the organization, with different organizational contingencies evoking leadership from various parts of the organization. From this perspective, "the behavior of actors, both individual and collective, expresses externally enforced institutions rather than internally derived goals" (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995: 231). Such theorizing suggests that organizations such as schools erect structures to reflect cultural rules in their external environment, and then in turn, conduct activities around those structures to develop shared values and meaning among organization members. To shape the processes of these organizations, leaders must adopt a contingency approach as they adapt to their particular contexts.

This notion of leadership as an organizational characteristic has been around for a number of years. In a similar vein, James MacGregor Burns (1978:19) asserts that effective leadership means inducing followers to act for certain goals "that represent the values and the motivations -- the aspirations and expectations -- of both leaders and followers." Burns's view of leadership suggests the need for more symmetrical studies

that explore not only the values and expectations of the leader but also the values and expectations that individuals and groups bring with them into their organizational roles and group interactions.

Leadership that reflects expectations invites examination in terms of perception or attribution. An individual's perception of leadership, therefore, might reveal as much about the person who uses it to describe someone else as the person who is described. Conceptions of leadership, following this line of reasoning, are rooted both in the culture of individuals and groups and in the context in which they work together to vest their efforts with meaning.

Such concepts of leadership bring together something of the earlier focus on the characteristics of the individual in the administrative role, and later studies that emphasize the context in which the leadership phenomenon takes place. As importantly, it suggests that "context" cannot be limited to narrowly conceived studies of group dynamics nor to organizational structures and cultures, but must conceive of leadership as a dialectic amongst the administrator's values, the structures and "culture" of the organization, and the values and norms that individuals bring to their participation in the organization.

Organizational and Cultural Divisions at Mary Blane

Evidence in this study suggests that Hernández, in implementing her entry plan, acted in ways that only partially recognized and responded to the complex role-related

diversity in the school's internal community. At the same time, there is evidence that the principal's and community members' misunderstanding of one another's inherent cultural assumptions, led to deep, unresolved conflict around the principal's reform measures, both within the school and in the greater school community.

It is not uncommon for administrators and teachers, working within the same school and with similar populations, to have quite different interpretations of the organization's mission and understanding of its well-being. In part, these differences grow out of the two groups' different roles and hence, differing organizational interests and professional cultures. Teachers often share similar backgrounds, beliefs and values, informal rules of behavior, and reward systems (Biklen, 1983; Johnson, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Weiss, 1995). The demographics and recruitment, selection, and promotion paths of administrators, on the other hand, are usually quite different from those of teachers, as is their sense of collegiality (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Miklos, 1988).

In times of change, these professional differences can become the focus of conflict. In a series of interviews with Chicago public school teachers in the 1950s, Howard Becker (1961) found that the authority of principals vis-à-vis teachers was rather limited. The teachers in Becker's study relied on the principal, acting as an official of the school system, to "back them up" against disgruntled parents and to support their disciplining of students. In their relations with parents and students, in other words, teachers accepted as legitimate the positional authority of the principal. Becker's teachers did not accept as legitimate, however, the authority of the principal in the areas of curriculum and instruction. Here, they preferred a principal who acted as a colleague, giving "constructive criticism" rather than orders. Becker notes that conflict usually arose

between teachers and principals who acted as superiors in academic areas or who failed to act in this capacity with parents and students.

More recently, Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) have identified three areas to focus on in order to understand better the ways the school context can affect teachers' work lives: principal's authority, conflicts between the job and the work of teaching, and teaching as women's work. Often the perception that teaching is a low status "women's work," requiring close management by supervisors, heightens tension.

For the most part, teachers at Mary Blane are a cohesive group of women who view themselves as *de facto* owners of the school and its mission. In a school where administrators have come and gone with debilitating frequency, the teachers believe that they have borne responsibility for doing the "real work" of this embattled organization and for keeping it functioning "through thick and thin." Through their long tenure in the classroom, the teachers have borne the brunt of the social and economic upheaval in this inner-city neighborhood. Many of the teachers, because they live in neighborhoods near the school, know first hand the pain that their students bring with them into their classes. And because the teachers have learned to expect little aid from central administration and the principal, they have had to turn to one another for support and nurture. As one teacher tellingly observes, "I think the teachers have run the school...The principal is basically to reinforce what the teacher is asking." This view is significant not merely for what it says about the role teachers have had to play in the school but perhaps more so for its suggestion that while principals may possess, by virtue of their title, the role of formal authority, what the teachers regard as the "real" authority, the authority to implement and govern, rests with them.

New principals, arriving with plans for change, have been regarded largely as interlopers at Mary Blane. Reflecting on her more than fifteen years as a teacher there, one woman explained:

[Principals] always come in here telling you to change this or that, and they don't even know the kids or the community. It's cynical, I guess, but I sometimes believe they're only using us as guinea pigs to get someplace better. After they move on, [the teachers] are the ones who are stuck with their decisions. You learn not to pay too much attention.

While cynicism toward principals they have worked with is common, the teachers demonstrate a certain ambivalence when they reflect on characteristics they would seek in an ideal principal.

The effective principal must be a good manager; all the teachers agree on this. He must also know how to "work the system" in order to procure resources for the school and he must remain in his job long enough to come to know and be known by the community. At a deeper level, however, the teachers increasingly recognize that the school needs more than efficient management in order to prosper. Positional authority is not enough. Even as the staff celebrates its "camaraderie" and support for one another, they express an almost wistful desire for what they term "real leadership." "[The principals] haven't been willing to stay the course; when the going got rough, they got out," one teacher asserts; "We need someone the community knows and respects." Respect from the often tumultuous neighborhoods of the community is a necessary characteristic of a successful principal.

Even as the teachers wish for a principal with competence in the day-to-day governance of the school, they recognize that such a leader must have a kind of moral

authority with the greater community. "These kids," one teacher observes, "aren't going to do what you say just because you're the principal; they've got to trust you...Same goes for the parents: you've got to know where they're coming from." In other words, the effective principal must demonstrate his understanding and commitment to the children and families of the Blane community in order to earn their trust.

On the practical level, a leader who understands this would enable teachers to devote more time to educating children -- what they consider their primary responsibility. All of the veteran teachers agree that, over the years, family and social issues have intruded into the classroom, leaving less time for academics. "You get kids coming in here now," says one teacher, "who are hyperactive or violent or just haven't been taught how to act around other kids. You need a principal there who's going to back you up; she has to be someone that families respect and will listen to. Discipline takes up too much of the teacher's time." Too often, the teachers say, principals either have not remained in their positions long enough to get to know the parents and earn their respect (which they equate with achieving authority in the community), or, the principals have been absent, attending to "politics" elsewhere when they were needed in the building, doing "the work of the school."

By the time Elena Hernández moved into the principal's office, she had been able to learn only two things about Blane teachers: most had been in their positions for a number of years, and, according to Hernández's predecessor, they were "difficult" to work with. Blane's teachers, the former principal warned Hernández in a telephone conversation, were "stuck in their ways" and resistant to change.

With this in mind, Hernández decided to "lay [her] cards on the table" in the

planning sessions which preceded the opening of school. In the first meeting, Hernández said quite frankly that she had been warned by the area superintendent that, owing to declining enrollments, Blane might very well close in a year's time. As a result, Hernandez announced, she planned to work to increase enrollments by creating a number of attractive activities and facilities for students such as computer classes and a refurbished playground. To obtain the additional resources these activities would cost, she would have to form partnerships with business and attract more professional and middle-class families to the school. All of this meant, she concluded, that everyone would have to work hard -- especially the principal. But by pulling together, they would be able to "turn the school around."

"I can tell you," Hernandez said in reflecting on this first meeting, "that their reaction was anything but encouraging. One, I won't tell you who, said, 'Oh, we've heard all of this before. They've been talking about closing this school for years.' Only because I insisted did they even consent to form work groups to consider what additional activities we might offer. I was completely discouraged. It was like they didn't really believe the school could close."

"Imagine from our perspective," said a veteran teacher about this same meeting,

what it was like. We had all been waiting to get to know her a little, to share ideas with her. But instead, she begins by announcing that the school was closing and that she wanted all of us to take on extra duties to save it. Frankly, it seemed like she just didn't know who we were or what she was talking about. Not once did she ask what we thought. It was like she had decided everything before she even arrived. And we were all like, "Brother. Here we go again!"

Almost immediately, therefore, Hernández, in choosing to address what she perceived to be the pressing issues of the school, relied on her positional or official authority to set the reform agenda and to structure the participation of the teachers. The teachers, conversely, reflecting their own history of isolation at the school, were looking for a leader who would govern more collaboratively. They wanted a principal who would validate their experience and knowledge of the school and community and seek their council and cooperation in formulating plans to make changes in the school. Unknowingly, Hernández sent two jarring messages in this first meeting: she would govern hierarchically and she expected teachers, already hard pressed to find time to teach effectively, to give up more of their time to attend to tasks whose importance they did not fully understand.

Hernández, in the weeks to come, made an effort to include the teachers in her plans, but she ran up against the existing school schedules. No more than two teachers ever had planning time in common; teachers took turns supervising each of the three lunch settings. Faced with these impediments, Hernández decided she would attempt to work with teachers one-on-one in their free time. Soon, however, with the principal's focus turning more and more to the demands of establishing business partnerships and working with leaders in the external communities, she found less time to work with teachers. In the end, few of these meetings ever took place.

From the teachers' perspective, this series of events fit an all too familiar pattern. As one teacher remarked:

First, she wanted us to come in a half-hour early each week. We don't have that kind of time; we're getting our own kids off to school then. She's a mother, she should know that. It's like she wanted us to shape our lives

around her plans. But pretty soon, she starts working with those guys at Hancock and the powers that be around here and we begin to see less of her. By then, though, it didn't matter to a lot of us.

Because she was obliged to spend more time out of the school, Hernández was frequently unavailable to exercise what the teachers considered the most critical function of a principal: working with teachers, families, and children on issues of discipline. By not "confronting the history of structured relationships" as Seymour Sarason (1972:43) terms it, Hernandez missed an opportunity to get the teachers invested in the future she was trying to create. By the end of that first semester, the new principal and the faculty had become frozen into what had become their traditional organizational roles at Blane: each regarding the other with suspicion, seldom crossing the imaginary line between their professional cultures.

Ethno-Racial Interpretations of the Principal's Role

The preceding analysis of the conflicting expectations of the leader in terms of role diversity (between the principal and teachers), while largely compatible with the findings of Becker (1953) and Feimen-Nemser and Floden (1986), offers but a limited insight into the deeper misunderstandings and conflicts that arose around the principal's entry plans. To understand the conflict at this deeper relational level, it is necessary to examine the ways groups in the school differed in their expectations of leadership and their responses to Hernández's attempts to lead in terms of their inherent or cultural values.

In exploring these themes from a group-based analysis, my intention is not to suggest that the various ethno-racial groups at Blane hold monolithic views nor to represent their views in ways that could be considered stereotypical. Indeed, I often found that as many variations existed within a group as similarities. My intention here is to surface general themes and explore them along the lines of the expectations expressed by the groups.

Black and white teachers revealed a marked difference in the expectations they held for the governing style of a principal. While both groups described Hernández's governing style as "top down" and "emotional," white teachers were generally more willing to see it within the context of situational and structural impediments. black teachers, on the other hand, often characterized Hernandez's style as hierarchical and unprofessional.

In reflecting on Hernández's leadership, for example, white teachers emphasized incidents in which the principal, through her "top down" governing style, had succeeded in imposing "order" on an often "chaotic school environment." If the principal was too hierarchical for their personal tastes -- and she often was -- at least the school ran more smoothly, the white teachers maintained.

Even though white teachers often expressed "disappointment" at being excluded from participating in Hernandez's decisions, they, far more than black teachers, were willing to accept the principal's style as a necessary measure, given the state of the school and the city school system. "With all that's going on here on an average day," said one white teacher, "the principal doesn't have time to consult everyone." The situation, they were willing to believe, was sometimes "chaotic" and required a "strong hand." And if

Hernández reacted emotionally in certain situations, then it was "only human. [The job] must be very frustrating." In other words, Hernández's "top-down" behavior, even if resented at times by white teachers, largely met the expectations that they held for a principal in the Blane School.

Black teachers, on the other hand, frequently described the principal as "militaristic" and "arbitrary." When referring to issues of discipline, for example, the black faculty believed the principal's actions to be examples of "dealing superficially" with disciplinary issues without bothering to understand the underlying social causes. Only by addressing disciplinary issues across school, family, and community boundaries, they believed, would the individual student learn to reform his behavior.

Black teachers often recalled that the principal, when questioned about her actions, sometimes took the teachers' "professional criticisms" personally and reacted "emotionally." One African-American teacher said: "You just never know how she's going to react to what you say; some days she's all right, other days she might just pout." Hernández's "top-down" governing style, as the black teachers saw it, conflicted with their expectation of working as equals with the leader. Furthermore, the principal's "pouting" conflicted with what the black teachers considered "professional behavior." By reacting emotionally to work issues, the principal, they believed, was not taking their views seriously and thus was showing disrespect for them as professionals.

While white teachers judged Hernández's effectiveness in terms of her personal example as a woman and an ethnic minority member, black teachers evaluated her in terms of her understanding of and involvement with the local community. To lead a school effectively, the black teachers all maintained, a principal needed to have respect

for and be respected by the entire community. For black teachers, a principal needed to develop a personal relationship with the families and institutional leaders of the entire community. Only through personal involvement could the principal hope to earn the respect (and thus, authority) necessary for working successfully with children and families inside the school. That Hernández lived in the suburbs prevented her from understanding community issues, according to the black teachers, and as a result, it also prevented her from being perceived by students and families as a leader worthy of trust and authority. For black teachers, the fact that Hernandez made contact with leaders of community organizations and brought their programs into the school, while good, was not enough to demonstrate personal involvement. Dealing primarily with community leaders did not demonstrate personal commitment.

In evaluating the work of the principal, white teachers tended to emphasize her managerial skills, charisma, and gender. The effective leader, for them, rather than being personally involved in the external community, needed to involve parents in their child's learning inside the school. The principal needed to get parents into their children's classes and involve them in the life of the school. White teachers made a distinction between the child's learning outside and inside the school, and saw the roles of the principal and the teacher as being focused more narrowly on the in-school experience. The effective principal, therefore, needed to concentrate on the education of students within the school.

White teachers saw in Hernández's ethnicity and gender, a role model for the community. That the principal lived in the suburbs, as the white teachers interpreted it, offered the hope to inner-city students that they, too, through hard work, might achieve this goal. White teachers judged her "inspirational example" as a "minority women" to be

an important ingredient in her effectiveness.

With black teachers, however, Hernández's status as a "woman of color" was often discussed in terms of her actions rather than her race or ethnicity. Early in Hernandez's tenure, for example, black teachers frequently referred to the principal's ethnicity as an important plus in working with the members of the Blane community. "[That she is Latina] is important," said a veteran black teacher, "because she's a minority like other people in this community. That makes things easier for all of us." As the relationship between the principal and teachers grew more estranged, however, black teachers increasingly referred to her as a "white woman." When Hernández made the decision to replace a departing black kindergarten teacher with a white teacher, for example, one African-American teacher remarked, "She's saying who she is [by this choice]; I don't see no 'minority woman' there. She's trying to act white."

Cultural Values and Hernandez's Leadership

Elena Hernández, when she entered Blane School, assumed the leadership role in a deeply divided academic community. At the structural level, there existed an on-going struggle between the administrative and faculty cultures in the organization. At the same time, there existed within the staff itself a discontinuity among the values and expectations expressed by black and white teachers, particularly around issues of principal authority, understandings of community and the position of the school within that community, and the significance of race and ethnicity vis-à-vis leadership.

Dignity and respect are two concepts Hernández frequently invokes to talk about

leadership. When she feels obliged to confront a lazy custodian, for example, she does not want to "take away his dignity" by pointing out his shortcomings "in front of other people. That's not [the Puerto Rican] way." In private, however, she can be, as was the case with the custodian, "very severe."

The concept of *respecto* (respect) is one of the core values in Puerto Rican culture (Fitzpatrick, 1971; Hidalgo, 1992; Lauria, 1972; Torruellas et al., 1991). *Respecto* is usually understood in two ways. The first type, a respect for self and others which all socialized Puerto Ricans must possess, is always expected in social interactions. It is a respect for another's human dignity. The second type is a respect for another's authority and stature, particularly for those occupying roles of superior status. Deference toward the authority role is expected, even if one feels reservations about the individual occupying the role.

The way children are socialized in the family clearly reflects this value of respect. Parents, to the child, are authorities who deserve respect; their decisions should not be questioned. The Puerto Rican family "is one with close emotional ties and psychological ties in which the child becomes well-acquainted with the hierarchy of power and the role expectations of each family member" (Salgado, quoting Nieves-Falcón, 1985:40).

In a study exploring differences in cultural factors of Head Start children, for example, Ortiz Colón (1985) discovered that Puerto Rican mothers and Anglo teachers, while agreeing on the appropriate outcomes for a child's learning, disagreed on the means to achieve those same outcomes. Teachers valued independence and verbal assertiveness; mothers, on the other hand, valued adherence to rules and obedience. Anglo teachers frequently found the Puerto Rican child "too passive" because the child did not respond

directly to the teacher or acted shyly in the teacher's presence. But passivity on the part of the child was in fact fulfilling cultural expectations.

When discussing her decisions as principal, Hernandez frequently relates them to the values of her culture. In explaining her critical evaluation of an African-American teacher, for example, Hernández explains:

There is a constant disorder in her class. Students are talking quite loud with each other; they never do their own work. And worst of all, I find that she argues with them! If the student doesn't want to do something, then he argues with her. There is no discipline in their learning. She acts like a mother with them but they do not respect her.

In this case, Hernández is making clear connections between pedagogy and the way she believes students learn best, and her larger set of cultural expectations. Learning, she suggests, must take place in an orderly, "disciplined" classroom where the students show "respect" for the teacher by not questioning her authority. Hernandez makes a clear distinction between the behavior she expects in the classroom and in the home. The teacher who does not work from these premises, is not a good teacher.

The African-American teacher in this instance, however, in reviewing her unsatisfactory evaluation, explained the dynamics of her classroom in quite different terms.

I like to see students engaged in their learning. If they get excited and need to share that excitement with others then I don't mind. And they can tell me what they like and don't like; they can think for themselves. I don't mind them arguing their case. You're not going to have these kids acting one way outside school and then expect them to do just the opposite in school. That's just Ms. Hernández's power thing.

The disparity in these two views reveals much about the cultural discontinuities between the Puerto Rican principal's cultural norms and expectations around children, schools, and communities and the contrasting ones of the African-American teacher. Unlike Hernández, the African-American teacher grants the student a wide range of emotions and behaviors in class; assertive, even aggressive, feelings are permissible, provided that the feelings are, in the teacher's judgment, expressed in the pursuit of learning. In so doing, the African-American teacher attempts to minimize the discontinuity in behavioral expectations between her classroom and the community outside of school.

For the African-American teacher, classroom learning should be embedded in a wider education which takes place across a variety of settings including the home and the community. This view contrasts sharply with Hernández's belief that "the class [is] a place of escape from whatever problems [a student] might have [outside the school] because the focus [is] on learning." At the same time, the white teachers, while not ignoring the possibility that education may be a wider-based phenomenon than just schooling, come closer to Hernández's view by maintaining that the proper focus of the teacher should be on the classroom experience.

Both black and white teachers, when reflecting on Hernández's conduct of faculty meetings, characterize her style as "stilted" and "formal," in contrast to their own relaxed style. One teacher explained: "there's just her and the faculty but she goes through this kind of formal thing where she stands up before all of us to speak. I have to say, she's

been here three years and I still don't feel like I know her." Similarly, the principal, when she speaks about teachers' work, frequently comments on factors such as the teacher's way of dressing and speaking. To be effective, Hernández maintains, a "teacher must offer a model that children can respect; that means dressing nicely and speaking properly. It's important." While teachers, both black and white, express general support for this view, they do not place it at the center of "good teaching" as Hernández does.

Cultural Values and Authority

Hernández points to two fundamental childhood experiences in shaping her values as an educator: her unquestioned respect for the authority of her grandmother and the disciplined education she received from the Catholic Sisters. Although not male, Hernández's two most important educational influences have been profoundly hierarchical and therefore heavily imbued with issues of respect and authority. When teachers in faculty meetings insist that Hernández retrace her work with leaders outside the school in the formulation of plans, Hernández experiences their attitude as "resistance" and "lethargy." Ultimately, Hernández says, "it feels like they don't trust me to do this job. I have to learn to slow down."

Parents' Interpretations of Hernandez's Leadership

A growing body of sociological literature examines the experiences of minority

children and their families as they first experience the institution of school. The historical value of interdependence and mutual aid in the African-American community, in which collaboration and group solidarity are emphasized, has been an area of increasing study (Gwaltney, 1981; Jewell, 1988; Stack, 1974). Other studies have documented the discontinuities between these values and those of the white, middle-class schools that the children of black families frequently attend (Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1987; Heath, 1982; Kochman, 1981; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1978).

While careful not to make monolithic claims about group experiences, other social scientists (Reese, Gallimore, Balzano, & Goldenberg, 1991; Suárez-Orozco, 1989; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995) have pointed out that, like Blacks and Asians, Latinos have also experienced dissonance between their culture-based values and those they experience in middle-class schools. LeVine and White (1986) have hypothesized that the traditional values of respect, family unity, good manners, and knowledge of right and wrong correspond to an "agrarian model" of values, as opposed to the mainstream "academic educational model," one characterized by social mobility, competition, and mass participation. Other scholars have pointed out that these two educational models reflect not merely differing ethnic or cultural values in schooling, but, frequently, the added dimension of socio-economic status (Metz, 1978; Oakes, 1985; Weis, Fine, & Lareau, 1992).

These competing models often lie at the heart of school-family conflicts for immigrant black, Latino, and Asian students today, just as they did a century earlier for the children of Irish, and Southern and Eastern European immigrants in Yankee Boston. While these studies do not specifically address the interactions of culture and leadership,

they serve to inform an examination of culturally-based values that different groups bring to their interactions with schools, and thus, with school leaders.

Hernandez and the Parent Community

Elena Hernández's appointment to the principal's position went largely unnoticed by Blane parents in the beginning. If they noted it at all, their comments usually had more to do with the frequency with which the position turned over than curiosity about the new occupant of the office. Left unsaid was recognition that the job, and thus the school, was not sufficiently prestigious to attract or to keep administrators of quality. It was not a new story. Most would have joined with the Blane teacher who said, "people within the community here are somewhat discarded...there's no affirmation."

As parents came to know the new occupant of the principal's office, however, they were generally impressed by how "correct" Hernández was. That the principal paid attention to "proper" dress; that she expressed great courtesy and respect in greeting parents; that she focused on the children's comportment, all "raised hopes," as a Jamaican parent put it, "that we had a principal who understood us."

"Understood" among immigrant parents generally meant that they interpreted the principal's values about education as a concern with more than mere academic skills. For Haitian, Latino, and Asian parents, in particular, an educated child is one who demonstrates "good manners," cleanliness, and above all, respect for their parents and

other adults. And an effective principal is one who cultivates a pedagogy that places these values at the center of the school's philosophy.

For African-American and white parents of the Blane community, these qualities were also important, but these parents often interpreted the qualities in a larger context. Immigrant Caribbean and Asian parents, if good manners and respect were in evidence, tended to trust that appropriate reading and writing skills were also being taught. In their cultures, a parent is not normally expected to establish a personal relationship with the teacher or the school principal; indeed, attempts to get involved in the teacher's work could be considered a show of disrespect.

African-American parents desired, if not a personal relationship with the principal, that the principal establish a personal relationship with the community. It was important to this group of parents that the principal live in the neighborhood so as to understand the lives of their children and embody the link between the school and the community. Otherwise, the bond of trust between parent and leader could not be formed, and thus the principal's moral authority remained questionable.

For middle-class white parents, Hernández's attention to issues such as proper dress and manners was all very well, so long as it did not interfere with a proper concern for the individual student and his or her "learning style." Too much attention in these areas, however, can be seen as too "regimented" and "old fashioned." The proper role of the principal, according to these parents, is to ensure that the individual child, independent of other considerations, receive an education that will prepare him or her to succeed in life beyond the school. Their evaluation of Hernández tended to focus on the principal's understanding of the "hard realities" of the resource issue and her managerial

skills.

"Race doesn't matter; it's a question of resources "

Not long after becoming principal, Hernández made the decision to begin actively recruiting the children of parents in the Melville Park neighborhood of Dorchester. "I saw it like a contest," she recalls; "or they would close the school or I would get the enrollments up. If I lost, we lost the school." But it wasn't merely a question of enrollments; Hernandez calculated that white parents would bring with them the skills for grant writing that would bring desperately needed resources into Blane. Their participation on the Parents Council and School-Based Management Council would infuse these long dormant bodies with new vitality. She did not understand, however, that this decision would be perceived quite differently by different constituencies throughout the greater community. "I come from a culture," Hernandez proudly declares, "where race doesn't mean like here. People don't even consider this an issue."

White parents were looking for a school where they could "have an impact." Among other things, they understood this to mean being able, and available, to work closely with Hernandez, and on an equal basis as professionals. They had always had this relationship with their children's schools. The increase in the number of white students at Blane represented to this group a practical decision; as one parent remarked, "it's not a question of race." At another level, however, Hernandez's adherence to this group's view

also meant that, politically, they were having the "impact" they desired.

The increase in the number of white students was understood differently by the immigrant Asian and Caribbean parents. When asked her reaction to this policy, a Jamaican parent said, "Look. It is the reality; let's face it. The more white families you have, the more money you have. That means a better education for my kids. The principal knows this." Asian parents, however, were reluctant to discuss the principal's policy in racial terms. "For Chinese," explained one Chinese father, "this not so big deal. Really, the issue more like good education. Kids, they need computer and these things." These parents tended to understand the economic necessity of bringing in more white families, even if they believed that the system was unjust. At the same time, it was important to these immigrant families that Hernández pay careful attention to issues of authority, respect, and structured learning in the school.

For African-American parents, however, this policy was interpreted as a betrayal of the principal's personal responsibility to the community. An African-American mother, a neighbor of the school, explains: "All of a sudden I was seeing all of these white parents over there, and I thought, Well this new principal's turning the school over to them." As in the past, the school leader has chosen to align herself with the powerful, thus making a politically expedient decision at the expense of the school's African-American children and families.

Conclusion

French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1933) noted at the end of the last century that the way we structure our social institutions is not a neutral enterprise; inherent in the design and function of institutions are the values and norms of the individuals and groups that produced them. In this same vein, Jerome Bruner (1996) tells us that

Cultures are not simply collections of people sharing a common language and historical tradition. They are composed of institutions that specify more concretely what roles people play and what status and respect these are accorded -- though the culture at large expresses its way of life through institutions as well (p.29).

The structure of public schools, as we know them today, is largely the product of a patriarchal, middle-class white society (Cremin, 1961; Katz, 1968).

With changes in the national economy, the demographics of the citizenry, and our notions of cultural identity, the mission and role of schools in our society have changed dramatically. As the role and mission of schools have grown broader and more democratic, the once monolithic hierarchy of male authority at their helm, reflecting similar trends in the greater society, has also begun to change. Particularly in urban schools, we now see greater racial, ethnic, and gender diversity not only in the neighborhoods and classrooms, but also in the faculty lounges and principals' offices. Increasingly, our conceptions of leadership in these communities are moving away from ones of positional authority vested in one single individual, to ones of collective authority, vested in the values of the community and the mutual commitment of

individuals to their children's education.

At least a portion of this conceptual shift in authority has been accompanied by a structural shift in governance. Shared governance and school-business partnerships have, in many cases, brought added resources into fiscally strapped schools, but they have also enlarged and complicated the number of constituencies about which the school principal must be concerned in attempting to lead. Today, the urban principal's responsibilities continue to grow, but her authority, both its extent and nature, is far from clear. And there are few maps to guide her into this new world.

When Elena Hernández assumed the principalship of the Mary Blane School, she faced a number of daunting challenges. Largely ignorant of the school community and its history, Hernandez devised an entry plan that responded almost exclusively to the organizational and political challenges of saving the school from closing. The school required additional resources in order to survive, and so she turned to the two most immediate and available sources of support: business and neighboring, white, middle-class families. Within a couple of years, she had succeeded beyond anyone's reasonable expectations, and yet, as she herself acknowledges, she had alienated much of the school community in doing so.

Successful leadership at the Blane School meant different things to different groups and constituencies. To Hernández's supervisors at the central office, leadership meant increasing student enrollments, attracting outside resources, and raising scores on achievement exams. By the end of her second year, the principal had accomplished much of this and thus, to central office, she was a successful leader. Other groups, however, understood and expected leadership to be manifested in different ways.

Hernández, in working to prevent the school from closing, responded to the challenge of diversity in this multicultural community as though it were principally a matter of getting the organizational roles right. She, as the school leader, exercised her positional authority to set an agenda which included the structuring of the teachers' and parents' participation in her plans. By forming relationships with a small number of white parents and businesses, she, as leader, was successful in attracting the resources necessary for improving the lives of teachers, students, and the community. And while she recognized that the teachers, for example, continued to have reservations about the way she exercised authority vis-à-vis their own roles and authority, she could not see a way of responding to their concerns, given the constraints on her time and the schedule imposed by circumstances. At this level of structural or role-related diversity, Hernandez was successful in galvanizing the organization toward her goals.

What Hernández failed to recognize, and therefore address, were the conflicting values and expectations in the community, both her own and those of the staff and parents. As we have seen, Hernández placed great emphasis on the value of respect, viewing it both as inherent dignity in the individual and as a show of deference for the leadership role. Many of her attitudes and decisions harken back to this hierarchical cultural value. Hernández's evaluation of teachers, her discipline decisions, her governing style, her expectations of deference from teachers, all reflect this general value. It also becomes the focus of a great deal of miscommunication and unresolved conflict.

At the same time as she addressed the needs of the organization, the principal failed to understand that other groups in the greater school community held differing culturally-based expectations of leadership. Many African-American teachers and parents

believed, for example, that the principal of the school also had to show personal commitment and connection to the community in order to exercise the necessary moral authority to lead. The model of leadership, particularly among the teachers, was expected to be collaborative and non-hierarchical. In governing from her own cultural values, Hernández came into direct conflict with these expectations.

The leader, who is herself a member of a marginalized group, cannot take for granted the values of other members of her community, even if they are fellow members of minority groups. Effective leadership requires her first to surface and examine the values, rituals, and traditions she embodies and introduces into her interactions with others. Hernandez failed to comprehend the complex dimensions of leadership in her school community; she astutely "reads" the organizational and political issues of her context and acts upon them with a considerable degree of success. But this proves successful on only one level.

Immigrant parents, in their interactions with the school and the principal, expected that the values of respect for adults, family, and authority be paramount, but manifested, at least in the classroom, as order, courtesy, and discipline. For this reason, Hernández enjoyed more support with immigrant parents than she did with other communities. It is only when Hernández made the politically expedient , and perhaps necessary, decision to replace a black teacher with a young white woman whose pedagogy conflicted strongly with the values of the immigrant families that many of these parents deserted Hernández.

White parents, who valued efficiency, assertiveness, and individuality in education and in their leader, found in Hernández, at least at the level of governance, an

ally. Because these families were looking for a school partner with whom they could have "impact," they were willing to offer their knowledge, resources, and skills. There is clear evidence that while there is not so much a values match between this group and the principal, there is certainly an alliance around necessity. One suspects that, in the future, there will be difficulties around basic values. In the meantime, both sides need each other.

My purpose in carrying out this study has been to explore the dynamics of leadership and cultural interactions in a community of diverse expectations. Even though the educational and organizational literature has documented the social and structural aspects of this dynamic, it has failed to capture the complexity of these interactions in a single system. It is precisely by understanding this interaction in a whole, integrated system -- whatever its particular characteristics -- that we can begin to think about how to study the interactions of culture and leadership more broadly.

Researchers have generally followed social systems theorists in their conceptions of cultural interactions within organizations as competing sets of motives:

We conceive of the social system as involving two major classes of phenomena, which are at once conceptually independent and phenomenally interactive. There are, first, the institutions with certain roles and expectations that will fulfill the goals of the system. Second, inhabiting the system are the individuals with certain personalities and needs-dispositions, whose interactions comprise what we generally call "social behavior" (Getzels & Guba, 1957:424).

While I concur with this model's conception of institutionally-defined roles, I find its definition of the individual's participation as an amalgam of "personality" and "needs disposition" to be simplistic and incomplete. Inherent in this model is the assumption that

the needs of individuals are primarily mediated by their roles in the group. In diverse settings such as the Blane School community, ethnicity and culture exercise powerful influences upon the way individuals interpret and act within their roles. In consequence, the expectations of leadership in ethno-racially diverse organizations such as schools are also powerfully influenced by the inherent diversity of constituent groups.

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